

July 31, 2009

County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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To:

Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman

Supervisor Gloria Molina

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From:

William T Fujioka

Chief Executive Officer

APRIL 28, 2009, BOARD ITEM 29-B: QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND TRAINING STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS

The purpose of this memo is to provide your Board with a response to the April 28, 2009, motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas directing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in conjunction with the Director of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Chief Probation Officer, to report back on the following issues:

- Training and education requirements for DCFS caseworkers and all other DCFS employees who come into contact with at-risk children, their families, or caretakers. This is to include a review of in-service training and continuing education requirements, as well as an analysis of whether these requirements are adequate, and whether they address the issues that occur in child death cases. In addition, conduct a comparison of DCFS' standards with best practices from other jurisdictions;
- Review the availability and quality of services provided to families in which a child has been abused or neglected. This should include: drug and alcohol treatment, domestic violence prevention, anger management, mental health services, and parenting classes. A review of linguistic availability and cultural appropriateness of these services should be undertaken. The mechanism for how these referrals are made, and the methods by which DCFS assesses whether the services have been effective in reducing the risk of future child abuse or neglect should also be examined;

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- An assessment of whether counseling and treatment services are located in areas where those services are needed. A demographic study should be completed to identify where DCFS-involved children are located and should include a breakdown by Service Planning Area (SPA) and language preferences;
- An assessment of DCFS' and other involved County departments' awareness of and adherence to protocols in response to crisis situations involving child endangerment cases;
- A review and accounting of whether a disproportionate number of parents involved in child endangerment and fatality cases are current and/or former foster youth. If so, what recommendations can be made to identify potential issues and provide additional preventative services to this population? Include this information in all future child fatality reports to the Board; and
- An assessment of the effectiveness of DCFS' Quality Assurance/Improvement Section (QA/I) and Risk Management Division (RM). Determine whether there should be a reconsideration of providing funding in the next fiscal year (FY) for additional positions in the QA/I and RM of DCFS. Include recommendations for 1) enhancing and improving the quality and availability of services for at-risk children and families; 2) the standards of training for DCFS caseworkers; and 3) funding associated with such enhancements and improvements.

Education Requirements and Quality of Training

DCFS maintains high education and training standards for entry to journey-level social worker positions. This employment class is most responsible for assessment, contact, and case management decisions for at-risk children and their families. The three entry-level positions for social workers are Children's Social Worker (CSW) Trainee, CSW I, and CSW II. The Trainee position requires either a Bachelor's degree in a social work related field, or a Bachelor's degree and one year paid experience in a social service agency providing child casework services. The CSW I position requirements are similar to the trainee, but with more extensive work experience. The CSW II position requires a Master's degree in social work or a related field, or a Bachelor's degree in social welfare or related field and two years of paid experience providing protection and placement services to children, or one year's experience as a CSW I in Los Angeles County. These requirements exceed those of nearby counties surveyed. A comparison of DCFS' standards with other jurisdictions is outlined in Attachments I and II. While DCFS requirements may be more stringent than other counties, we believe the requirements are necessary and appropriate to prepare County social workers for the additional training they will receive in the Department and for their subsequent casework duties.

DCFS provides extensive entry and in-service training to social workers and their supervisors. We believe the County's partnership with the Inter-University Consortium (i.e., the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, and the California State University at Long Beach, Los Angeles, Northridge, and Dominguez Hills) enables DCFS to provide outstanding training in casework policies and practices. The training classes incorporate best practices in the field of social welfare and findings from RM reviews and QA/I studies.

All required State training is provided to social workers during their first eight weeks of employment at the Department's Core Academy and prior to new social workers receiving caseloads. The training includes such topics as identifying child maltreatment, assessing safety risk, case planning, legal report writing, and other essential areas. The social workers are evaluated with multiple choice or skill-based tests, with scores compared to other social workers throughout the State. These scores reflect DCFS social workers meeting or exceeding the norms throughout the State.

The Department also provides an academy for supervising social workers. The 15-day training program exceeds the requirements of the statewide-standardized Supervisor Core Training Program and is designed for all child welfare supervisors and recommended for supervisors of less than one year. Training topics include casework supervision, achieving outcomes, managing performance, and other key supervisory skills.

In addition, DCFS provides extensive in-service training for its staff. In-service training presents new initiatives or practice upgrades on topics such as structured decision making, interviewing, permanence, and new regulations and policies. This training provides staff with continually improving strategies for improving outcomes for children and families. The in-service curriculum is updated periodically to reflect best practices and new techniques.

Specifically, DCFS has established an ongoing interface among training, RM and QA/I managers. This interface ensures that key practice and policy issues identified through case reviews or special incident (e.g., child fatalities) reports are corrected as necessary and incorporated into the training curriculum. For example, in response to recent reviews, the Department has reinvigorated its Emergency Response (ER) Academy, and is developing training on improving investigations and safety assessments, including a focus on assessing a child's development, risk associated with a caregiver's mental health, domestic violence, and making collateral contacts (e.g., with reporting parties).

Based on our review, DCFS' minimum requirements to be a CSW, as well as in-service and ongoing training is appropriate and adequately prepares DCFS social workers who come into contact with children and families.

Review of the Availability and Quality of Services

DCFS has access to extensive substance abuse treatment and counseling services (e.g., for domestic violence, anger management, sexual abuse, parenting, and mental heath needs) throughout the County. Substance abuse programs include those contracted through the Department of Public Health's Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, or funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and no cost services such as Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous. Mental health services are provided through various referral and linkage services including those funded directly by your Board. These programs include: Wraparound, which provides team-based planning and individualized, coordinated, family-driven care to meet the complex needs of children who are at risk of placement in institutional settings and who experience emotional, behavioral, or mental health difficulties; the Coordinated Service Action Team (CSAT), which ensures timely mental health screening, assessment, and linkage to mental health services for children having an open case with the Department; and the Regional Center Program which established a Regional Center liaison in each DCFS office, a Public Health Nurse, a foster care-rate representative and a County Counsel representative to best meet the needs of children with developmental disabilities. A variety of counseling and related services, such as parent training and in-home outreach and demonstration, is provided through the Family Preservation (FP) program.

These services have been developed with the geographic, cultural, and linguistic needs of children and families in mind. The FP program has 64 contracted agencies that, through an extensive network of subcontracted agencies, provide services to families throughout the County. Wraparound, substance abuse services, and mental health programs are also available throughout the County. CSAT has been implemented in Service Planning Area (SPA) 7 (i.e., the general areas in and around East Los Angeles and Santa Fe Springs) and will expand countywide by June 2010. The Department continues to monitor the availability of services in high demand areas and works to develop needed ancillary services. For example, certain services such as housing, child care and other supportive programs are needed in densely populated and economically challenged areas.

The referral process for most services is initiated by the case-carrying social worker. For substance abuse treatment, the social worker may refer a client to Court-ordered drug services or drug testing at any time. A parent may also be referred directly to a special Dependency Drug Court program by the Court, or a parent may voluntarily agree to the program after consultation with a social worker. For FP, the case-carrying social worker refers a family to their office's Community Based Liaison who assigns the family to a service provider. Similarly, social workers access Wraparound services through a Wraparound liaison, or through the Resource Management Process, CSAT, or the Multidisciplinary Assessment Team, which also process diagnostic screenings and mental health services for children new to DCFS and receiving placement services.

DCFS managers and social workers monitor these services to confirm the desired outcomes are obtained. Program managers receive performance reports from contracted agencies (e.g., Wraparound and FP providers) and case-carrying social workers receive therapist reports and treatment updates for inclusion in Court reports and to assist in making casework decisions. The Department assesses the effectiveness of these services in reducing child abuse and neglect primarily by monitoring children's safety and well-being after they reunify with their parents, usually for a minimum of six months.

Demographic Review

As mentioned above, services have been developed with the geographic, cultural, and linguistic needs of children and families in mind. DCFS solicits for agencies providing bi-lingual and multi-lingual services according to the needs of their communities with most services provided in English and Spanish, and others such as FP, available in Asian-Pacific languages as well. Attachments III and IV provide a visual representation of how departmental services are distributed according to the needs of the area. Attachment III shows the County, each SPA, and zip code boundaries. The zip codes are colored in graduated shading from light to dark, with the darkest areas having the highest densities of DCFS-served children and families. Layered on top of the shadings are colored symbols representing service programs such as, FP, Wraparound, substance abuse, and mental health. Attachment III also indicates that services are provided where they are most needed.

Attachment IV shows DCFS' caseload distribution per SPA according to the child's primary language. The chart indicates that approximately 72 percent of cases have English as the primary language, 27 percent have Spanish, and about one percent has another language. Since the majority of the non-English and non-Spanish speaking households in the County primarily use an Asian-Pacific language, the Department has established a special Asian-Pacific program consisting of social workers who speak a variety of Asian languages. In addition, DCFS contracts for FP services to serve these non-English/non-Spanish speaking families.

Assessment of Protocols in Response to Crisis Situations Involving Child Endangerment Cases

DCFS has a number of specific procedural guidelines in place for staff to delineate protocols social workers must follow in response to crisis situations, including investigating allegations of child endangerment. These procedural guidelines provide detailed instructions for actions to be taken during every stage of service, such as child abuse or neglect investigations, out-of-home placements, family reunification, and permanency planning. Managers and supervisors monitor social worker's adherence to established protocols through close supervision and review of available management reports.

These reports provide a detailed review of case compliance measures for individual social workers.

The Department's procedural guidelines also include information on topics such as assessing the need for health, mental health, and public social services assistance. Additionally, there are specific procedural guidelines for cross-reporting child abuse or neglect allegations to law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney, City Attorney, California Community Care Licensing Division, and the Probation Department.

Abused children benefit when investigative efforts are coordinated between County departments and agencies, particularly when responding to crisis situations. DCFS currently has social workers co-located in approximately 30 different law enforcement offices, and a total of 25 social workers assigned to the Multi-Agency Response Team (MART), which includes local, State, and federal law enforcement agencies. The MART social worker provides emergency protective services to children following law enforcement raids on homes associated with dangerous activity, such as gang involvement, illegal firearms, and narcotic activity.

Regarding Probation Department protocols, by law all deputized staff members of the Probation Department are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. All newly hired Probation Officers are required to complete Juvenile Correctional Officer Core Training, which includes instruction on the role and responsibilities of mandated reporters. In addition, Juvenile Hall staff, and Camp Deputies are required to complete annual booster training on mandated reporter responsibilities. Deputies working in the Adult Units who are required to make field visits were recently trained on child abuse/neglect recognition and reporting.

DCFS continues to work closely with other involved County departments to update and modify protocols to ensure appropriate responses to crisis situations are coordinated and effective. Based on our review, we believe DCFS and the other involved County departments are aware of and adhere to the evolving protocols in response to crisis situations involving child endangerment cases.

A review and accounting of whether a disproportionate number of parents involved in child endangerment and fatality cases are current and/or former foster youth.

The Department's Critical Incident/Child Fatality Review (CI/CF) section has initiated review efforts focusing first on the 2008 child fatalities caused by abuse or neglect. Of the 32 child fatalities caused by abuse or neglect in 2008, it was determined 10 parents (nine biological parents and one stepparent) involved in these fatalities received on-going services in open DCFS cases when they themselves were children; and, two of these parents were dependent minors at the time of the fatalities and both remain dependents at this time. While in the past the Department took note of a parent's history as a dependent minor for

case review purposes, this data began to be systematically captured on a flow basis for child fatalities beginning in January 2009. Among the variables now being recorded for parents on child fatality cases who were themselves minors with Department history are: 1) reason for case opening; 2) age at entry into the system; 3) number of prior referrals; 4) length of services; 5) number of placements; 6) criminal history; 7) mental health services; and, 8) level of compliance.

In 2008 and continuing into 2009, DCFS' Executive Team, RM division, and the CI/CF section placed an emphasis on collecting information regarding child fatality and critical incident cases and developing departmental processes and protocols to use this information to inform program improvement and organizational learning. To this end, in December 2008, the Emergency Response Steering Committee (ERSC) was created to provide the organizational structure and oversight necessary to aggressively respond to findings by the RM division indicating a need to improve front-end investigations and assessments. Additionally, consistent with recommendations made by the ERSC, a reinvigorated comprehensive training program for ER investigators, their supervisors, and administrators is being developed and is scheduled for rollout in Fall 2009.

In May 2009, Up Front Assessments were implemented at the ER Command Post to provide after-hours investigators with the ability to secure immediate specialized assessments for domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse issues, and intervention by community providers as appropriate.

Other strategies and initiatives under consideration by the Department to provide additional preventative services include:

- The expansion of and enhancements to concurrent investigations with law enforcement;
- Improvements in information gathering and referral processing at the Child Protection Hotline;
- Increasing public health nursing capabilities in the regional offices and the ER Command Post;
- Implementing alternative referral assignment methods to ensure the equitable assignment of child abuse and neglect referrals to investigators;
- The development of an investigations handbook that enumerates the critical investigation and assessment activities contained in the various departmental policies in a concise and practical field guide;
- Condensing and clarifying policies;
- Developing additional internal and community resources for front-end workers;
 and
- Expanding and reinforcing the use of the Family and Children's Index.

For purposes of informing program improvement, a number of recent enhancements to the Department's Child Fatality Review Protocols have been made. They include:

- The systematic recording of case review findings by the CI/CF review section for those fatalities suspected of being caused by abuse or neglect where there is Department history, which captures specific policy/procedure violations and the timeframe, office and work unit in which these violations occurred;
- An update and reinforcement of the internal child fatality reporting process that
 ensures that executive level managers are provided reports from line staff
 regarding child fatalities within 48 hours. These internal reports, which inform
 the reports to your Board, include critical information regarding the safety and
 status of any surviving siblings, the preliminary investigative steps taken, and the
 investigative and assessment activities planned; and
- The implementation of Administrative Review Roundtables (ARR), which include the RM Division Chief, County Counsel, and managers from within the Department. At the ARR, which take place within 14 days of a child fatality suspected to be due to abuse or neglect where there is DCFS history, decisions are made to place staff on desk duty, refer a case to Internal Affairs (IA), and direct regional office management to perform their own After Action Review (AAR) for purposes of office specific learning.

Additionally, under the new protocols, child fatality case review findings, ARR outcomes, IA findings, and regional office ARR outcomes are given to the Department's QA/I section, which is tasked with the responsibility to consolidate this information, identify themes and trends, and prepare recommendations as needed in the following areas: 1) Targeted Quality Case Reviews; 2) Policy changes; 3) Training needs; 4) Internal communications; and 5) Resource development.

We believe the Department is taking the necessary actions to identify parents who have been or remain dependent or delinquent minors. It is recommended the DCFS continue to expand prevention services to better understand and reduce the cycle of abuse.

An assessment of the effectiveness of DCFS' Quality Assurance/Improvement Section and Risk Management Division and whether there should be a reconsideration of providing funding in the next fiscal year for additional positions in the Quality Assurance/Improvement Section and Risk Management Division of DCFS.

In April 2009, your Board approved the creation of the Department's new QA/I section. This section is responsible for ensuring performance measures most critical to child safety and positive outcomes are met. In addition, the section analyzes multiple-source data, including critical incident and child fatality reviews, IA investigations, and litigation outcomes to

identify areas needing system-wide improvement. The section is developing and scheduling monthly QA/I meetings in regional field offices, and implementing other quality control programs and tools to promote continual performance improvement. The Department will be assessing the effectiveness of these efforts as data becomes available.

The RM division is comprised of the CI/CF review section (1 CSA II, 5 CSA I, 1 Senior Typist Clerk and 1 Intermediate Typist Clerk), Litigation Management (LM) (1 CSA III, 1 CSA II, 1 CSA II, 1 Secretary III and 1 Senior Typist Clerk), and IA (1 Head Administrative Investigations, 5 CSA I and 2 ASM I) which manage by a Division Chief with a Senior Secretary III. While each of these sections has a different focus and purpose, all have been relatively effective and continue to improve. The LM section works effectively with County Counsel and outside counsel to monitor claims and lawsuits, and promote favorable resolutions to matters under litigation. Although the CI/CF review and IA sections continue to improve, the sections have experienced challenges due to the volume of cases with a limited number of analysts and investigators available to manage the workload.

We have reviewed the current staffing configuration for these sections and the Department's estimated unmet needs. These staffing requirements were included in the Department's recent letter to your Board regarding critical unmet needs in their FY 2009-10 Adopted Budget and are as follows:

Risk Management \$ 3,303,000

2 - CSA III (one to manage CI/CF and one to manage IA)

- 2 CSA II (one to supervise a unit of seven CSA I in IA investigating child fatalities and special incidents, and one in LM to supervise existing staff and to perform various higher level administrative duties);
- 13 CSA I (three to review critical incidents and child fatalities, nine to perform IA investigations, and one in LM to process claims, public record requests and other administrative functions);
- 1 Administrative Services Manager (ASM) II (for IA to supervise a unit of seven ASM I investigating fraud and misconduct);
- 5 ASM I (support);
- 2 Secretary III (one for CI/CF and one for IA); and
- 1 Senior Typist Clerk

TOTAL UNMET STAFFING NEEDS

\$3,303,000

The estimated annual costs above include funding for workstation computers, space, and specialized equipment, such as two high volume fax machines and a heavy-duty scan back machine to process public records requests and documents associated with litigation. We recommend that as funding becomes available, your Board consider expanding the RM and QA/I sections.

Summary

This report summarizes a significant amount of information regarding a number of programs and initiatives within DCFS. It includes the standards and qualifications required of social workers entering the Department; how social workers are trained on an ongoing basis; the Department's success in delivering geographically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services; how the Department monitors its social workers adherence to protocols in crisis situations; the Department's positive partnerships with law enforcement agencies that help keep children safe during dangerous law enforcement raids; the Department's efforts to track and analyze data to help prevent child fatalities and intergenerational child abuse; the establishment of the Department's RM division and QA/I section and the challenges they face; and estimated funding requirements to adequately staff these operations.

Please contact me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Trish Ploehn at (213) 351-5600. Thank you.

WTF:SRH:MS PSP:BM:AM:cvb

Attachments

c: Acting County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director, Children and Family Services
Chief Probation Officer

2nd District Motion - Response 7-23-09

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CSW I

similar jurisdictions. The chart below details the requirements compared between Department of Children and Family Services and other An investigation of minimum training and experience requirements for Children's Social Worker series compared to Social Worker series in other county public agencies reveals that the minimum requirements for new hires into DCFS are consistent with those of jurisdictions.

LOS ANGELES	RIVERSIDE	ORANGE	SAN BERNARDINO
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL	CHILDREN SOCIAL SERVICES	SOCIAL WORKER II	SOCIAL WODKED II
WORKERI	WORKER III		SOCIAL WORNER II
OPTION I - One year as a Children's	OPTION I – Possession of a Bachelor's	Option I – Six months of experience	OPTION A: Bachelors degree in
Social Worker Trainee for Los	degree in Social Work from a recognized	as a Social Worker I with the County	social work, which included a
Angeles County	college AND two years case planning/case	of Orange.	supervised social work internship
	management experience in social services		practicum or field work experience.
OPTION II - Bachelor's degree from	agency performing duties equivalent to	Option II – Bachelor's degree from	
an accredited college with a major in	Riverside County at level of Social Services	an accredited college in behavioral	OPTION B : Bachelors degree in a
psychology, sociology, social work,	Worker II classification	sciences such as psychology,	behavioral science, psychology,
child development, or a related human		counseling, sociology, or social work	sociology, social/human services,
services field - AND - either one year	OPTION II – Possession of a Master's	and two years social casework	behavior anthropology, gerontology,
of paid experience in a social service	degree from a recognized college in social	experience in a public or private	cultural and gender studies or human
agency providing protective/placement	or behavioral science, social welfare, or a	organization.	development AND 480 hours of
casework services to children or	closely related field.		experience obtained in a supervised
families with children or two years of		Option III – Transfer from another	internship practicum or equivalent
paid experience performing the duties		California county with two years	work or field work. EXPERIENCE:
of a Los Angeles County Social		experience in a position equivalent to	Providing mental health substance
Worker II or higher		a Social Worker II with the County	abuse, or social work services such as
		of Orange.	interviewing and referring clients,
OPTION III - Bachelor's degree from			counseling and case management
an accredited college including 12			services.
units in psychology, sociology, social			
work, child development or other			OPTION C : 30 (thirty) semester
related human services courses - AND			units of completed college course
- either two years' of paid experience			work as above, half of which must be
in a social services agency providing			upper division AND 1 year
protective/ placement casework			experience equivalent to an entry
services to children or families with			level social worker. Equivalent duties
children or four years' of paid			include interviewing and referring
experience performing the duties of a			clients, counseling and case
Los Angeles County Social Worker II			management services in a social
or higher.			services environment.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CSW II

similar jurisdictions. The chart below details the requirements compared between Department of Children and Family Services and other An investigation of minimum training and experience requirements for Children's Social Worker series compared to Social Worker series in other county public agencies reveals that the minimum requirements for new hires into DCFS are consistent with those of jurisdictions.

SAN BERNARDINO		Does not have a similar item		
ORANGE		Does not have a similar item		
RIVERSIDE	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES WORKER IV	OPTION I – Possession of a Master's of Social Work degree from a recognized school in social work.	OPTION II - Possession of a Master's degree in psychology, marriage and family therapy or counseling, from a recognized college which includes 300 hours of field placement experience. OPTION III - Possession of a Master's degree from a recognized college in social welfare, social or behavioral sciences, social/human services, or a closely related field AND One year of post-Master's Degree social case planning / management experience (assessment and case plans for abuse and neglect cases) in a public or private agency in a class equivalent to Riverside County's Children's Social Services Worker III/IV or Social Services Worker III/IV. Option IV - Possession of a Bachelor's degree from a recognized college in social welfare, social or behavioral	sciences, social/human services, counseling or a closely related field AND Three years of experience equivalent to Riverside County Social Services Worker III or Social Services Worker III classification in a Department of Public Social Services. The experience must have included the following duties as the primary portion of the assignment: assessments, case planning / case management and court reports for abuse and neglect cases.
LOS ANGELES	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER II	Option I - A Master's degree from an accredited college or university school in Social Work Marriage and Family	Counseling, Psychological Counseling, or Clinical Psychology Clinical Psychology Option II - A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in Psychology, Sociology, Social Welfare, Child Development, or a related human services field -AND- Two years of social work experience providing protective or placement services to children or families with children or rendering social services to wards or dependent children of the court within the past five years Option III - One year of experience as a Children's Social Worker I in the service	of the County of Los Angeles.

RESOURCES

- Family Preservation Program (FPP)
- Up-Front Assessment (UFA)
- Medical Hub
- Medical Hub (Pending)
- Dependency Drug Court
- △ Wraparound Services
- Time Limited Reunification Program (TLFR)
- Foster Youth Substance Abuse Services
- Mental Health Providers

SPA Overlay

Total Caseload

Number of Children by ZIP Code

1 - 49

50 - 124

125 - 239

240 - 434

435 - 729

	Children in Out	Children	Pacas
SPA	of-Home	Receiving In-	Total
	Placement	Home Services	וסומו
	1,898	298	2,765
2	1,994	1,544	3,538
3	3,252	1,477	4,729
4	739	916	1,655
LC	170	141	311
9	3,705	2,448	6,153
7	2,284	1,592	3,876
8	2,727	1,454	4,181
Total In-LA County	16,769	10,439	27,208
Out-of-LA County	2,925	254	3,179
Invalid Address	558	1,333	1,891
Grand Total	20,252	12,026	32,278

Los Angeles County - ATTACHMENT III Department of Children and Family Services Total DCFS Caseload by ZIP Code Data as of April 30, 2009



